DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 124 681 UD 016 141

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TITLE	Ira Gordon Follow Through (Richmond, Virginia).
INSTITUTION	Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. ERIC Clearinghouse on the Urban Disadvantaged.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center for Educational Communication (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	72
GRANT	OEG-71-3946
NOTE	34p.; For full report, see ED 099 458; Part of project entitled Preparation of Publications on Progress in Compensatory Education and Desegregation Programs
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Enrichment Programs; Grade 1; Grade 2; Grade 3; Home Visits; *Intervention; Kindergarten; Low Income; Negro Students; *Paraprofessional School Personnel; *Parent School Relationship; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; *Primary Grades; Program Descriptions; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	Educational Opportunity Act Title II; Follow Through Program; *Virginia (Richmond)

ABSTRACT

The Richmond, Virginia Follow Through program is currently in its sixth year of operation in grades kindergarten to three in 12 urban schools. Funded primarily by Educational Opportunity Act Title II funds, the program serves a student population in which the majority of pupils are black and 50 percent are from poor families. The program seeks to improve the learning ability of the child and the education and participation of the parent through a continuous program in which both home and school are integral parts of a single unit. The program provides educational, social and cultural experiences for the child and his family so that the entire environment becomes more conducive to learning. This is done through several methods: the institution of a new kind of paraprofessional, the parent educator, into the classroom; weekly home visits in which the parent educator collaborates with the parent on an educational task program for the child; field trips for parents and children; the fostering and encouragement of an active Parent Advisory Committee; on extensive, continuous in-service training program; and a multi-level educational component. This program is found to be exemplary for several reasons. (Author/JM)

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ED124681

IRA GORDON FOLLOW THROUGH

(Richmond, Virginia)

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
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New York, New York 10027

1972

UD 016 141

This document was produced as part of the project entitled Preparation of Publications on Progress in Compensatory Education and Desegregation Programs which was funded by the U.S. Office of Education, Dissemination Center for Educational Communication (OEG-71-3946). Points of view or opinions expressed in this material do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of the U.S. Office of Education.

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Preface

In efforts at improving the quality of education and at justifying expenditures for compensatory education and school desegregation, we are increasingly dependent upon the data of evaluative research. Yet the data from many of these evaluation efforts conducted over the past twelve years are confused and inconclusive. The findings from these studies are sometimes contradictory. The interpretations have become the subject of considerable controversy, particularly as these findings and interpretations appear to contradict some of our cherished assumptions concerning education and educability. The lack of clarity with respect to the meaning of these data and the value of such programs is in part attributable to a variety of problems in the design and conduct of evaluative research. Among these problems, increasing attention is being called to the fact that there are sparse data concerning the specific nature of program interventions. These tend to be reported under labels or brief descriptions which provide little information relative to the nature and quality of the treatments to which the pupils studied are exposed. In an effort at gaining a better understanding of the content and nature of some of these programs, this project was directed at describing selected programs thought to be exemplary of quality, progress, trends or problems in compensatory education and school desegregation. Ten compensatory education programs and two school desegregation programs were selected for detailed description.

The principal procedures utilized in this study included documentary

analysis, direct observation of programs and interviews with selected informants. The tasks to be accomplished included identification and selection of projects to be studied, collection of all available data on each project considered, field study of promising candidate projects, preparation of descriptive reports, final selection and reporting.

Following is the description of one of these selected programs. For the complete report of this project see document number ED 099 458 in the ERIC system.

Designed to

enable parents to contribute to the education of their children
increase parent participation in the education of their children
make home and community a part of the children's learning experience
decrease the impediments to learning inherent in a disequalized child's environment
permit the child to achieve greater cognitive skills
increase the child's confidence in self and ability
increase understanding and decrease tension within racially integrated schools

Through

an instructional team composed of professionals and paraprofessional parent educators
a classroom situation in which the parent educator works closely with the teachers and children in the teaching situation
educational materials for home use which take into account school goals for the child and family expectations for the child's life styles and value systems
a weekly, continuous, structured system of home visits in which the parent educator works closely with individual parents about their child's program
an active, involved Parents Advisory Committee
constant, continuous flow of information to/from school, community, home

The Richmond, Virginia Follow Through Program has created

intensive inservice programs for both professionals and parent educators
a system of highly committed parent educators
increased interest and participation by parents in the education of their children
increased contact and communication between school and home
improved racial understanding and decreased racial friction
positive changes (testing results) in home adjustment and Personality Total Adjustment Scale (related to Home-Adjustment) for Follow Through pupils
positive verbal and quantitative gains in test scores for Follow Through pupils

That a child's home environment can drastically affect his ability to learn, his understanding of self, and his confidence in the world are no longer unproven hypotheses. Recent pedagogical and psychological research has illustrated too clearly and too poignantly the close relationship between family situation and educational achievement. As in many other instances, here again the disequalized child is the victim. In recent years, educators have come to realize that to change the environment and the learning patterns only within the school does not suffice. Follow Through Programs have evolved as a response to this recognition. As the title indicates, these programs seek to effect change in the total environment of the child and thus to reinforce the changes initiated within the school. Like pebbles thrown into a pond, such programs touch and alter the lives of increasingly wider circles of people--children, parents, community. Various models of Follow Through programs are in use in school systems throughout the United States. In Richmond, Virginia, the site of this exemplary program, the Ira Gordon model which emphasized parent involvement and education, is in use.

SUMMARY

The Richmond, Virginia Follow Through program is currently in its sixth year of operation in grades K-3 in twelve urban schools. Funded primarily by EOA Title II funds, the program serves a student population in which the majority of pupils are black and 50% are from families with incomes below the OEO poverty level. The program seeks to improve the learning ability of the child and the education and participation of the parent through a continuous program in which both home and school are integral parts of a single unit. The program provides educational, social and cultural experiences for the child and his family so that the entire environment becomes more conducive to learning. This is done through several methods: the institution of a new kind of paraprofessional, the parent educator, into the classroom; weekly

home visits in which the parent educator collaborates with the parent on an educational task program for the child; field trips for parents and children; the fostering and encouragement of an active Parent Advisory Committee involved in all phases of the program; an extensive, continuous in-service training program; and a multi-level educational component for parents. In addition, by the presence of both black and white parent educators in integrated classrooms and at home visits with both white and black parents, the program aspires to decrease the racial tensions present in many cities that have integrated their schools in the wake of the 1954 Brown decisions. This program is exemplary for several reasons: (1) the design model considers the total environment of the child a single unit that will determine either positively or negatively the child's development; (2) it has increased parent participation and effectiveness in the child's education; and (3) a concrete concept of teacher behavior exists and, through the close collaboration between home and school, is adapted to individual need. Moreover, commitment to change by staff, children, and parents is necessitated by the program design. Finally and, perhaps most important, this Follow Through program affects the relationships and attitudes that the parents, children, and staff have with each other, educational institutions, the community and society.

WHERE

Like many other cities in the southern part of the United States, Richmond has a changing population pattern. Today its population is 75 percent black and the Richmond student body is 70 percent black. In the past few years, a series of court decisions have ordered increased busing and many of the white families have moved out of the city into the surrounding areas. However, a

1971 decision ordering the combination of districts to achieve further racial integration was recently overruled. Thus, this issue is still unresolved.

As a result of the federal legislation of the 1960's, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, black political participation has increased, but is still limited. The Richmond Follow Through program affects the East End and Oregon Hill areas of the city. Both communities are poor. Most of the blacks live in the East End section. Nearly twenty-nine percent (28.7%) of the 45,000 inhabitants have less than $2,000 in annual income, and 48 percent of the area had less than $3,000. Of the adult population (25 years and older), 61.7 percent have completed only eight years of school. Because of limited education and little industry, unemployment rates are high. Approximately 800 families (predominantly white) live in the Oregon Hill area. Oregon Hill's black families have a median income of $3658; its white families, of approximately $5156. In addition to the Follow Through program, other federal funded school programs including Headstart, Model Cities, and Title I, exist.

WHO

THE STUDENTS

Seven hundred and fifty-one students, the majority of them black, participate in the Follow Through Program. They are enrolled in grades K-3 in twelve Richmond schools (total enrollment: 7,348 pupils). The income levels are under $5,000 for 50% of the children's families. (Follow Through programs must include 50% from below poverty level.) Fifty percent of the children have previously been enrolled in Head Start programs. The remaining 50% come from the community at large. The criteria for selection is applied

primarily to those within the poverty category: short attention span; low level in both verbal and non-verbal function; negative self-image; poor health; evidence of aptitude for learning; high absentee rate; family history; economic needs; and racial balance (80% white; 20% black). Although the disadvantaged students in the program started with limited backgrounds and test scores indicative of low achievement in reading, at the end of the year they had made gains that correlate with age and grade level. White students in the program appear to enjoy it and have made gains as well.

WHEN AND WHY

The Richmond Follow Through Program utilizes the Ira Gordon Parent Education model designed by the Florida Institute of Human Resources, College of Education, University of Florida. The planning staff consisted of Mrs. Virgie Binford, now the Follow Through Director, and representatives of the Virginia Education Association, Richmond Principals Association, Association of Directors and Principals, Elementary Teachers Association, and Secondary Teachers Association. Local civic and community organizations were also recruited to involve the community and professional staff in the program's inception.

In the fall of 1966 Richmond inaugurated this Follow Through program because in these schools the majority of kindergarten children, as a result of their disequalized background, were not prepared for the primary educational experience.

WHAT

As the model title indicates, the involvement, education, and participation of parents is primary. The Richmond program is one of twelve in the U.S.

that uses the Ira Gordon model. The model has the following objectives:

1. Training of mothers, two in each classroom in the combined role of parent educator and teacher auxiliary

2. Aiding the teacher in the use of paraprofessional personnel

3. Development of educational materials for home use that take into account school goals for the child and family expectations for the child's life styles and value system

4. Involvement of the Parent Advisory Committee in all phases of the program

5. Provision of a set of teacher behavior models to serve as guides in planning activities

6. Increased individualization of instruction to meet each child's needs

To these model objectives, the Richmond planners have added the following objectives:

7. Creation of an atmosphere within the classroom that is conducive to learning

8. Development of a team of professionals and paraprofessionals cognizant of the needs of young children and their parents

9. Establishment of a guide to creating a positive self-image in the children and parents through counseling, rewards reinforcement, and positive critical and continual advice, direction, and evaluation

10. Provision of medical, dental, social, and psychological services to all enrolled who cannot afford to pay for them

11. Development of a nutrition and health education program for parents, staff, and children

12. Coordination via the central administrative offices of the Follow Through program with other Richmond public schools

13. An informed public and encouragement of community participation

14. Utilization of volunteers and students in all phases of the program to provide research materials through the school system

15. Conduct of research and feedback results to parents, staff and community

16. Conduct of monthly training programs for Follow Through staff

17. Achievement of readiness and communications skills

HOW

The Follow Through program achieves these objectives through a varied program in which heavy emphasis is given to the active participation of parents in all parts of the learning experience. Before a child enters the program his parents agree to contribute 20% of their time to some aspect of the program, e.g. washing soiled art smocks, providing transportation for field trips, planning and supervising a physical education activity, etc. Parents are also required to allow home visits by the parent educator whose function is to help them learn an individual task to teach their child. Finally, all are urged to join the Parent Advisory Committee to promote the program.

A teacher and two parent educators work in each classroom of 25 pupils. The classrooms are colorful and contain many exciting learning materials. The daily schedule is flexible and can be changed if circumstances and children's needs warrant. In some instances, teachers use the open classroom, while others employ a more traditional organizational structure.

THE LEARNING TASK

An important part of each child's curriculum is the individual task that is planned for each child. All the people involved in the child's learning experience--teacher, parent educator, and parent--participate in the determination, execution and achievement of the learning task. In terms of quantity, the number of tasks already developed and accessable to the educators fills several huge notebooks. In addition, new tasks are being developed and distributed monthly due to the efforts of parents, teachers, parent educators, curriculum specialists and the center at the University of Florida. As a result of the volume of tasks on hand and the rapid growth of new tasks, all tasks are coded by numbers.

Each child in the classroom receives an individualized task based on his or her level of achievement or performance. These tasks are first sent to the central Follow Through office for approval by the director and curriculum specialist. If they are approved, the teachers receive a coded series of sequenced tasks which are placed in the child's folder. The tasks are available for other teachers to use, although the teacher is encouraged to develop new tasks weekly.

The Institute at the University of Florida has stated the following as being characteristic of a good task:

When:

1. The learner does a lot of talking
2. The learner has fun doing it; there's a lot of interest and action
3. The directions are clear enough that it can be taught
4. You and the learner understand why you are doing it
5. It encourages the teacher to use a lot of ways to teach, and the learner to try different ways to do it
6. If possible home materials are used
7. The learner knows he has learned something, he can see it right away and feel good about it
8. The learner is encouraged to think up new activities or things to do which grow out of the task

The parent educators gather data on the children's skills areas in order to develop the task. In her weekly visit with the parents, the parent educator gives the parent a personal plan directly related to the child's activity and progression in school. The parent is taught how to introduce the task, explain its relevance, and help the child to understand it. Then he or she practices the presentation with the parent educator who acts as child. The following week the parent educator returns to determine if the task was presented (An informal check is made in class to determine whether this is done); the amount

of time spent (15 minutes per day is the minimum); and the level of success achieved. The parents are asked to conceive tasks for their children and to send them to school for the teacher to develop.

The underlying theme of the home visit is to discuss, recognize and establish a method of resolving problems in the home and to help the parent become aware of self in relation to children, community, and school. The children are pleased with their parents' awareness of the school activities and with parental assistance at home.

TEACHER BEHAVIORS

Curricula vary somewhat among the Follow Through schools depending on each school's philosophy for academics. In addition to the learning tasks, the other theme which is stressed in all the Follow Through classrooms is that of teacher behaviors. These have been selected as important foci in teaching style, and, most desirably, should be incorporated into all teaching-learning situations. These teaching behaviors are not confined to the Mother-Child interactions, but are also appropriate for Teacher-Child, Parent Educator-Child, Parent Educator-Mother and Teacher-Parent Educator Interactions:

1. Elicit questions from the learner.
2. Elicit more than one-word answers from the learner; encourage the learner to enlarge upon response and use complete sentences.
3. Ask questions that have more than one correct answer.
4. Praise the learner when he does well or even takes small steps in the right direction. Let the learner know when he is wrong, but do so in a positive or neutral manner.
5. Get the learner to evaluate or make judgments or choices on the basis of evidence and/or criteria, rather than by random guessing, chance, luck, authority, etc.
6. Give the learner time to think about the problem; don't be too quick to help.

7. Give the child some time to familiarize himself with the task materials. Before proceeding into a structured learning situation, give the learner an introduction or overv iew.

WHO
THE STAFF

The project is built on the concept of TEAM (Together Each Achieves More). Although the present director of the program contributes immeasurably to the program's success, the structure of the model is so completely developed that a less successful supervisor could execute it with positive, albeit not so dramatic, results. The project director serves as a liaison between the home, school , and the University of Florida Institute. Promoting public relations in an official capacity is a major function. She also coordinates and supervises various components of the program, such as in-service meetings and workshops, weekly ev aluation of the components of the program, conferences with members of supportive services, etc.

The staff includes the director, classroom teachers, parent educators, institute consultants (part-time), volunteers, psychologist, career development specialist, home-school coordinator, parent educator coordinator, instruction curriculum specialist, school social worker, and a guidance counselor.

The teachers in the program were chosen from the Richmond school system. Each teacher acts as a supervisor and trainer to the parent educators within her class. While general materials are prescribed by the central administration, each teacher may request additional materials. Each month the teacher accompanies the parent educator to the students' homes.

The parent educator, the central part of the program, works in the classroom with the teacher and pupils and at home with the parents.

Although no formal schooling is necessary, the model requires knowledge equivalent to an eighth grade education. The parent educator is responsible for 1-15 one hour visits per week and classroom teacher assistance on three days of the week. She receives weekly training. Parents with children in the program receive priority for these positions, and the other participants come from the community. The PAC committee screens applicants for this position before they are approved by the school personnel office. All meet the federal income requirements. Initially there were two male parent educators; however, one is now director of a program he started with skills gained in the Follow Through program.

The consultant from the University of Florida plans with the director and attends the monthly meeting for instructional staff.

A speech therapist and psychologist work with children on a regular basis at the request of the teacher. Parents must give written request to the administration for this service. A free medical diagnostic service is available for those children under the poverty line and at a nominal cost to others. Two counselors support the program and work closely with the social worker.

The curriculum supervisor is responsible for all phases of curriculum support to the classroom teacher and for supplying continued material for staff development.

Because the education of parents is a vital part of the program, the career development specialist exercises an important role. A program of health education and career development is provided on a regular basis with advisory and placement services available to the parents. The career development specialist is responsible for the parent educators' staff

development and for the individual development of the parents with children in Follow Through. This includes job placement, education, appearance, and health. Mrs. Johnson, the career development specialist, conducts the weekly parent educator inservice training sessions and coordinates the activities of student-teachers, volunteers, and tutors. Currently 30 parents and parent educators are in college; they receive special tutoring in the courses they take. She maintains a list of available positions, counsels parents, and assists with high school equivalency. She is also the liaison to Virginia Union and Virginia Commonwealth Universities.

The parent educator coordinator coordinates and directs their activities. A former teacher in the program, she serves as a liaison between parents and program.

Volunteers, who include parents, college students and retired teachers, participate daily in the program.

INSERVICE TRAINING

Parent educators meet weekly on Friday afternoons to discuss programs and receive further training. In addition, the instructional staff meets monthly for an entire morning. At these group meetings, specialists, such as mental health consultants (who discuss community health and classroom dynamics) or nutrition experts (who speak on methods of teaching health habits) address the group. These meetings are held in a different Follow Through school each month. In the afternoon, the teachers, accompanied by the parent educators, visit the homes of their participating students.

The staff also is encouraged to study other innovative programs to learn of new techniques. A modified T group and an Encounter Group to deal with internal staff problems is also held on a regular basis.

WHO
PARENTS

Parents participate in this program at every level. They teach at home and in the schools. Most parents are very enthusiastic about the program. If the white parents do not accept the parent educator in their home, their child must withdraw from the program. The parent educator home placement is based on classroom assignment, and no attempt is made to match parent educators with parents according to race.

If the mother's educational level and willingness to implement the task obviate the necessity of the parent educator's home visit, the task is sent home without assistance. Parents frequently participate in the various educational and cultural trips provided by the program. All children in one family are not necessarily involved in the program, although many families do have more than one child in the program. Unfortunately, fathers are not very involved in the program.

THE COMMUNITY

Through the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and the extensive liaison with universities, the community is very involved in this Follow Through program. The committee is open to everyone in the community, although parents predominate. One of the program objectives is continual and extensive information and feedback to the community, and it seems to have had an impact. The committee is involved in curriculum, evaluation, budget, and community action. At monthly meetings, the staff presents a proposed educational program prior to its being placed in the Follow Through curriculum. The PAC also interviews and must approve all personnel prior to their engagement by the program. It also plans educational and social events for the parents.

HOW
COST

The program has an annual budget of $710,980.99 to cover a twelve-month program for all children. Of this total, $457,673.29 are EOA funds; $114,329.11 are from ESEA Title I; and $119,461.60 from Richmond funds. The total cost per child in the Follow Through program exceeds the Richmond public school's per pupil allotment of $700.00 by $650.00.

EVALUATION

Various kinds of tests designed to measure both cognitive learning and attitudinal change have been administered. Final results were not yet available as of January 1973. Previous results have been summarized:

> In summary, for the affective area the analysis of self concept changes was inconclusive. Positive changes, however, were rated for one particular index--Home-Adjustment--of child behavior. In the cognitive domain, results were good. Follow Through children made positive verbal and quantitative gains as a result of the Follow Through Program, placing them at par with other " regular" (or control) pupils in the Richmond Public Schools.

EFFECTIVENESS

The school's involvement in the total development of the child and the particular emphasis on strengthening the parents' roles as facilitators of child development are the premises that underlie the project. In an in-school program which duplicates modern concepts of early childhood education, it emphasizes cognitive development, through attention to communication skills and other academic readiness skills; affective development, through an emphasis on self-concept and social coping; and physical development, through health and nutritional services. It is the project's efforts at strengthening and enhancing the parental role that make it unique. In the pursuit of this objective, work with parents appears to receive as much attention as does work with children. In addition to the usual forms of parent

education with respect to child care, attention is given to parental self-concept and parental motivation. In the instructional work with parents, special emphasis is given to assisting parents in the mastery of those behaviors which actively support what the children do and learn in school.

The basic elements of this program were developed elsewhere by Ira Gordon and his associates, and the essential question with respect to the appropriateness of those elements has been fairly well-established through Gordon's research. Since the Richmond project represents one of the best applications of the model, it is exemplary of one of the major approaches to upgrading educational development through early intervention. Because of its heavy dependence on the level of parental cooperation, the appropriateness of this project may be influenced by the nature of the population involved. There may be a question with respect to the utility of this model in work with most disequalized families, sometimes referred to as the hard-to-reach. Confronted with parents who show a relatively low level of motivation for active involvement in the development of their children, the project staff faces the exceedingly heavy responsibility for not only achieving their involvement but for maintaining it on a level appropriate to this project which is so heavily dependent upon parent participation. On the other hand, the project's concern for parent action, community organization, and active flow of home-school curriculum, as well as active involvement in the development of parents as people, probably comes as close to any program currently available for meeting the needs implicit in this kind of problem.

It should not go unnoted that this project is being implemented in a southern city with an ethnically mixed population. Although we are working with an age group which some consider easiest to work with in regard to ethnic mix, the fact that the project places such heavy emphasis on adult participation contributes

an additional complicating dimension. The extent of "white flight" in certain residential areas is a source of some concern. (One school, to which black children are bussed, is currently operating at one-third capacity, and the project is 75% black). However, the number of white parents who form the minority that works effectively with the parent educators, most of whom are black, is impressive. Even though it is not the purpose of the project to achieve integration, this utilization of high level parental interest, developed in the pursuit of solutions to common problems in child rearing, is commendable.

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